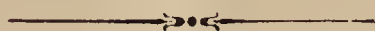


*To little blue shoes*  
*Wm. B.*  
**In Memoriam.**

14



**SIR ROBERT CHRISTISON, BART.,**  
M.D., LL.D., D.C.L.



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## SIR ROBERT CHRISTISON, BART.,

M.D., LL.D., D.C.L.

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WITHIN the period of a few years it has been our mournful task to record the death of Syme, Simpson, Bennett, Laycock, Andrew Wood, and Sanders. Christison, a contemporary of these representatives and upholders of the medical fame of Edinburgh during a brilliant stage in its history, remained with us to form, as it were, a link in the chain which united the present with the past generation. This link has now at last been severed, and the present generation has lost the direct connexion with a past generation which Christison's latter life so powerfully represented.

For upwards of half a century he had occupied a prominent position in his profession and in the scientific and social life of Edinburgh. As a teacher and as a writer on medical and scientific subjects his name was so widely known, that it may truly be asserted that wherever the English language is spoken deep regret will be felt for the loss of one who to so many has been a beloved and respected teacher, and to all a representative of the highest eminence in practical and scientific medicine. His strongly-marked individuality, presenting always a model of uprightness and nobility of character, has exerted an influence which it is impossible to exaggerate in elevating the tone of his profession much beyond the limits within which his personal example could be directly felt. In his native city his sage and influential counsel had to the last been actively exerted in favour of those interests to which his life was devoted; and his fellow-citizens had become so accustomed to the strongly-knit, elastic figure, which until recently was daily present before them, that the loss will never be forgotten by the present generation.

Robert Christison was born in Edinburgh on the 18th of July 1797. His father, Mr Alexander Christison, was for several years Professor of Humanity in the University, and he has left a reputation for great scholarly and scientific attainments, high personal character, and enthusiastic admiration for the heroes of his classical



studies. Under his judicious direction young Christison received his early education at the High School, from which he proceeded, at the early but at that time by no means unusual age of fourteen, to the Arts classes of the University. Having spent four years in the study of literature and natural and physical science, he became a student of medicine, although his first intention appears to have been to adopt the profession of an engineer. At the end of his second year of medical study a fortunate chance placed him in the position of Resident Assistant in the Royal Infirmary—first in the medical, and afterwards in the surgical wards; and he thus for two and a half years enjoyed unrivalled opportunities for acquiring a familiarity with practical medicine and surgery. His attention, however, was not restricted to these subjects. The sciences accessory to medicine had from the first attracted his interest, and he devoted to some of them, and especially to botany and chemistry, such time as he could spare from his other occupations. In the latter science, opportunities for practical study in the University could scarcely be said to exist; and it is significant of his self-reliant energy that, along with a few fellow-students,—among whom were Edward Turner, afterwards Professor of Chemistry in University College, London, and James Syme, destined in future years to co-operate so powerfully with Christison in extending the reputation of the Medical Faculty of the University,—he instituted a self-educating class, in which the experiments from day to day exhibited by Dr Charles Hope, the professor of chemistry, were repeated and varied. The experiences of this class formed for Christison a happy recollection. He not unfrequently, even in the last years of his life, recounted the difficulties which had to be surmounted, and the accidents, often of a farcical description, which resulted from these experiments, and in which Syme occasionally figured in a prominent manner.

After graduating as Doctor of Medicine, in 1819, Dr Christison was led by a desire to extend his knowledge to proceed to London, where he attached himself for several months to St Bartholomew's Hospital. The unusual facilities that then existed in Paris for acquiring a theoretical and practical knowledge of chemistry induced him afterwards to proceed to that city. He there worked with great diligence in the laboratory of Robiquet, attending also the lectures of Vauquelin and Thenard on chemistry, of Guy-Lussac on physics, and of Orfila on toxicology. In connexion with his subsequent work and reputation as a pharmacist, it is interesting to note that he was a frequent visitor at the French Institute when Pelletier and Caventou announced their numerous discoveries on the then novel subject of the chemical composition of vegetable substances, and especially on the separation and characters of the alkaloids.

While he was in Paris, the death of Dr Gregory led to a readjustment in the occupancy of some of the medical chairs in

Edinburgh, and to a vacancy in that of Medical Jurisprudence. Dr Christison was proposed by his friends as a candidate, and after a keen competition he received the appointment. Though only twenty-five years of age, and a graduate of not more than two and a half years' standing, his education and acquirements eminently fitted him for this office. He had already gained much experience of disease, he had received a thorough training in practical chemistry, and he had acquired the most recent information in toxicology from its most distinguished exponent. He entered upon his new duties with an earnestness which was a marked feature in his character, and soon entirely justified the wisdom of his selection. From 1822 to 1832 he retained this appointment, and in this period of ten years he succeeded in raising the number of his class from twelve to ninety students, in reducing to order and precision much that was confused and indeterminate in the teaching of Medical Jurisprudence, in adding by his investigations new departments to this many-sided subject, and in gaining for himself a reputation which afterwards placed him in the first position in this country as a medical jurist.

This reputation was also very materially founded upon his *Treatise on Poisons*, the first edition of which was published in 1829, and was followed by other three editions, of which the last appeared in 1845. This treatise has been characterized by the highest legal authority in Scotland as "a book which was received at once by physicians and jurists and men of science as the most philosophical and complete work that had yet been published on the subject." It soon assumed an authoritative position in the literature of medical jurisprudence, and it still retains the position of a generally recognised standard for reference. The advance of knowledge has necessarily rendered many of the statements it contains of less value and importance now than at the time of, and for many years after, its publication; but it will ever remain a conspicuous evidence of the author's power of systematizing existing knowledge, of educing principles from judiciously considered facts, acquired with much industry from a wide range of medical literature and from laborious personal observations, and of stating in terse and lucid language the results of original experiments and the details of chemical processes.

A professor of medical jurisprudence with such high qualifications naturally received much employment in the law courts. Dr Christison's first case is said to have been the notorious one of Burke and Hare, and in the course of time his advice was sought for and his evidence engaged in probably every important trial in Scotland involving matter of medical opinion. His evidence was given impartially, and stated in unmistakable language; he avoided the great temptation of acting as a partisan; and as every statement he made had been deliberately considered, the cross-examination of opposing counsel rarely affected his evidence.



After he had occupied the Chair of Medical Jurisprudence for ten years, Dr Christison was transferred, in 1832, to that of *Materia Medica*, which had become vacant by the death of Dr Andrew Duncan. The present generation of his pupils can associate him as a teacher only with this subject, as his connexion with the University as professor terminated when he resigned the Chair of *Materia Medica* in 1877. During this long incumbency of forty-five years, Dr Christison gained for himself a reputation in *Materia Medica* at least equal to that he had gained in Medical Jurisprudence. The former subject presents some analogy to the latter in embracing several subsidiary departments or sciences. The existing knowledge in these departments, or the preferences of the individual, naturally influence the attention that is bestowed on any department. Both circumstances operated in giving a distinctive character to Dr Christison's teaching and work. He was a trained chemist, and the chemical and pharmaceutical consideration of medicinal agents formed for him a strong attraction. By his careful and exact work in this department, and his wisdom in early appreciating the value of the discovery of the vegetable alkaloids, of which he had heard much from the lips of Pelletier and Caventou, the pioneers in this field of research, he acquired the reputation of being the first pharmaceutical chemist in this country. He had for years engaged in toxicological researches, and the symptoms produced by poisonous doses of the more active of the articles in the *Materia Medica* were carefully observed and described by him. His experience in practical medicine and as a clinical teacher led to his enunciating with great detail the more obvious effects that followed the administration of remedies in disease, and to his classifying these effects in elaborate categories. These distinctive characters were conspicuous in his lectures, and they have been stereotyped in the famous *Dispensatory* he published in 1842. This publication ably represented the advancements which had been made in chemistry, pharmacy, and therapeutics since the time of the last edition of the *Edinburgh New Dispensatory* of Dr Christison's predecessor, Dr Andrew Duncan, and it more than maintained the reputation of the University of Edinburgh as a school of *Materia Medica* which the latter publication had been so instrumental in founding. It possessed all the excellences of precise and lucid exposition, of judicious generalization, and of the application of original observations in rendering statements more definite and in enlarging the boundaries of previously existing knowledge, which form so marked features of Dr Christison's treatise on poisons. In the descriptions of physiological action the methods of research prevalent at the time are ably reflected. Trained in a school of which Orfila was the most prominent representative, and whose methods and aims had not been markedly affected by the conceptions of physiological action which the genius of Majendie and Claude Bernard had introduced, and which were afterwards

destined to revolutionize pharmacology, Dr Christison, in the earlier part of his work as a teacher of materia medica, bestowed the greater part of his attention to the chemical and pharmaceutical subdivisions of his subject, and to the toxicological rather than the ultimate physiological effects of remedies. It was his merit, however, to have fully recognised the value of the new departure which the investigation of the action of remedies on individual functions and structures had given to the most important subdivision of his subject. At the public dinner in celebration of his fiftieth anniversary as a professor in the University he expressed the opinion that "therapeutic physiology is a splendid and still little-trodden field, without the cultivation of which we shall never make any material advances in the knowledge of the actions of remedies and their real uses in disease;" and he expressed the same opinion, in nearly the same terms, in his evidence before the Scottish University Commission several years subsequently. To his powerful advocacy may be attributed the investigations in pharmacology undertaken by many of his pupils, and the fact that they were the first in this country to enter on this field of research.

In all his scientific work he exhibited a special aptitude for experimental investigation. In chemistry, pharmacy, and toxicology his researches were numerous, and distinguished by great accuracy. He was an extremely orderly and neat worker, and displayed much ingenuity in devising apparatus, some of which still exists in the Materia Medica laboratory of the University, and illustrates well his manipulative dexterity and fertility of resource. In his researches on the effects of poisonous and medicinal substances he showed how thoroughly he appreciated the necessity for experiments on animals; and when, in after years, sentimental agitation threatened to obstruct the progress of knowledge, he unhesitatingly opposed all legislative interference which had for its necessary consequence the preventing of research in the only direction in which advancement could be achieved. An able argument in defence of the experimental method in toxicology, which it is hoped may yet be published, was read by him to the writer of this notice only a few weeks before his death, and he then discussed with much interest the means which should be adopted to counteract the pernicious effects of the Act relating to experiments on the lower animals.

In connexion with his work in Materia Medica, Dr Christison rendered invaluable service in the preparation of the last edition of the *Edinburgh Pharmacopœia*, and in acting as chairman of the committee of the General Medical Council charged with the difficult task of harmonizing the Pharmacopœias of England, Scotland, and Ireland into a national codex. The valuable museum which he so industriously collected is probably surpassed in this country only by the museum of the Pharmaceutical Society



of Great Britain; and it awaits removal to its nearly finished new abode in the University New Buildings before its treasures can be properly displayed.

Previously to Dr Christison's appointment to the Chair of Materia Medica, he had for several years fulfilled the duties of a visiting physician to the Royal Infirmary. In 1832 he became a clinical professor, and it is a singular testimony of his devotion to science that he entered upon his duty with the intention of devoting all his time and energy to the study of the effects of medicinal substances in disease, and, in this sense, of making his Infirmary work subsidiary to the study of therapeutics. This intention, however, was not destined to be entirely fulfilled, and it is impossible to predict how important might have been the results if concentrated effort on a favourite subject could have been permitted him for a sufficiently extended period. The great success of the Medical Faculty of the University produced a condition of things which brought this great success to an end. Students had resorted to Edinburgh from England, Ireland, and America, and, by filling the class-rooms, had provided a sufficient income for the professors to enable some of them to devote their time entirely to University duties. In the course of time these students became the teachers in medical schools, and performed the work so efficiently that the classes in the University of Edinburgh diminished in numbers, and the emoluments of the professors became seriously reduced. In these circumstances Dr Christison found it necessary to engage in practice in order to be relieved from all pecuniary difficulty, and, to his great disappointment, his original intention had to be abandoned. Gradually he acquired a leading position as a physician, though it was not until he was nearly fifty years of age that his time was so engrossed by consultation practice that he found it necessary to withdraw himself from hospital teaching. In the interval he had achieved a great reputation as a physician, chiefly by his writings on "Granular Degeneration of the Kidneys," published in 1838, on fevers, on scurvy, and on many other medical topics, which generally appeared in the *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, a periodical of which he was for several years the editor. On the death of Dr Alison his practice as a physician became the largest and most lucrative in Scotland, and it was not until he was seventy years of age that he finally withdrew from it.

A protracted, though happily only temporary, illness led him, in 1877, to resign the Chair of Materia Medica, and so to terminate a career as a professor in the University of fifty-five years' duration, forty-five years of which had been spent in the teaching of Materia Medica. Even this statement falls short in adequately representing Sir Robert Christison's important services to the University of Edinburgh. His business habits, his decision of character, and his familiarity with the affairs of the University, rendered him one of



the most valuable and influential of the members of its Senate. While still a junior professor, he acted as Dean of his Faculty; for many years, he guided the financial arrangements of the University; from 1858 until the time of his death, he served as a member of the University Court; and on several occasions he gave important assistance to commissions and committees appointed to inquire into University affairs. It will be recollected with melancholy interest that his last public appearances were directly connected with those interests his long life had been so closely identified with. A few months before his death he attended an important meeting of the University Court; and on another very recent occasion, when his health was already impaired, he took an active part, as member of a deputation, in urging upon the Scottish representatives of the Government the necessity for appointing an Executive Commission to bring to a practical issue the work of the Universities' Commission of 1876. He entered with great activity into the proposal for building the New Royal Infirmary, and took a leading part in adjusting the details of its construction. When the yearly increasing number of students in the medical classes indicated the necessity for an extension of the University buildings, his powerful co-operation aided in realizing the gigantic scheme, which affords a reasonable expectation that the Medical Faculty may enter upon a career even surpassing in usefulness and prosperity its present unexampled success. He early sounded the alarm when the proposal was mooted to convert the Universities of Scotland into mere schools for teaching, and to transfer their ancient right of conferring degrees to a central examining board; and under his championship the danger was for a time warded off.

Notwithstanding his multifarious occupations, Christison never forgot that the students of the University had claims upon him which were not limited by the intercourse of the class-room. He was peculiarly a man to win the affection and respect of ingenuous youth. Nature had endowed him with the physical qualities of an active and well-proportioned frame, which, under well-ordered exercise, to the last retained the elasticity of youth. Tradition associated with him the exploits of an athlete. Personal intercourse revealed, under a somewhat reserved demeanour, a kind and sympathizing disposition, and a character free from petty jealousy, and possessing the attributes of an honourable and chivalrous gentleman. While he still remained a professor his influence and popularity with the students were probably unequalled. No one could more perfectly maintain order in an assemblage containing disturbing elements; and no one succeeded in restoring order in a noisy meeting, or in quelling riotous outbreaks, such as those which in former years signalized the occurrence of snow-storms, more effectively than the Professor of Materia Medica. He was elected by admiring students to the office of patron or president of nearly all their clubs and societies; he was for many years the popular

captain of their Volunteer company; and whenever his active interest was gained for any scheme in which the students were concerned, as in the inauguration and support of the Musical Society, success became insured. His relation to the students could not be more emphatically attested than by the fact that after he had resigned his professor's position his influence with succeeding generations of students—which could have been founded on reputation only—remained as great as with the students who knew him as professor. His appearance among the former was always the signal for an ovation; and very recently a large section of them enthusiastically supported him for the office of Lord Rector, when, against his recommendation, political feelings were unfortunately imported into the contest.

The unexampled services which Christison rendered to his University, and which naturally followed the faithful fulfilment by a man of exceptional powers and activity of an early-formed resolution to make his University office his “main and primary object,” met with grateful acknowledgment. While yet a professor, his bust was placed in the hall of the University, and the equally unprecedented honour of the degree of LL.D. was conferred upon him by his University, which required that a standing order prohibiting this degree from being conferred upon a member of Senate, should be set aside. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his induction as professor, a banquet was given in his honour, at which the most eminent representatives of science, literature, and the learned professions, and the most respected citizens of his native city, paid homage and offered their congratulations to the veteran Professor. On the same occasion there were presented to him an address from graduates of the Edinburgh University residing in London, and a sword of honour from the members of his Volunteer Rifle Company.

It is equally gratifying to find that his long life of usefulness brought to him honours and distinctions from many other quarters. His professional and scientific fame extended far beyond his native country. His name was a familiar one among the members of the medical profession in every civilized country, and he was enrolled as an honorary member in a large number of foreign scientific and medical societies, including the Academy of Medicine of Paris. At home, professional and scientific honours were abundantly bestowed upon him. He was elected on two occasions, in 1838 and 1846, President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh; and by a unanimous resolution of the College his portrait was placed in their hall, notwithstanding the fact that he was at the time opposed to the majority of the College in some matters of medical politics. He was selected by the Crown in 1858 to represent the medical profession of Scotland in the General Medical Council, and from 1858 till 1873 he exercised a great influence in the deliberations of that important body. The University of



Oxford in 1868 acknowledged his merits by conferring upon him the honorary degree of D.C.L. Upon the death of Sir David Brewster he was elected President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, "the highest scientific office in Scotland;" and after he had occupied this position from 1868 to 1873, the Society emphasised its appreciation of his scientific merits by placing his portrait in their gallery. The esteem with which he was regarded by the medical profession in this country was shown by his election to the Presidentship of the British Medical Association when that body met in Edinburgh, in the year 1875; and he inaugurated his office by a masterly address on medical education and licensing, in which he emphatically declared himself against the "one-portal" system. For many years he held the office of Physician in Ordinary to the Queen in Scotland; and in 1871 he received the highest distinction which in this country is accorded to a member of his profession, when, on the recommendation of Mr Gladstone, a baronetcy was conferred upon him. He regarded this honour with special gratification. To quote from his speech at the banquet in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of his induction as a professor:—"Few, perhaps, are aware of the peculiarity of the honour thus conferred on me. My name has not been a family name until now in any part of Scotland. There is reason to suppose that my first progenitor in Scotland was one of those piratical rogues who long ago used to come across from Scandinavia to plunder this land. . . . The honour recently bestowed upon me by Her Majesty is peculiarly gratifying, inasmuch as I am able to say that for the first time the name of Christison has become the name of a family."

Sir Robert Christison's services were not, however, restricted to the interests of science and medicine. He was an active and leading citizen of Edinburgh, and he co-operated heartily in many schemes originated for the purpose of improving the social and material condition of his fellow-men. The improvement of the amenity of his native city, the securing for it of a pure water supply, and the management of the affairs of its noble charity, the Royal Infirmary, received a large share of his attention. He acted as President of the Sanitary Association from its foundation, and he was a prominent member of the Society for the Prevention of the Pollution of Streams.

He has frequently been described as a strong partisan in politics. His leanings were undoubtedly in favour of an enlightened Conservatism; but many of the proceedings of Tory Governments failed to receive his sympathy or approval. During the greater part of his life, indeed, while holding his own views on important questions of State policy, he refrained from taking any active share in politics,—the disingenuousness so often associated with political discussion being repugnant to his singularly just and honourable mind. When he felt bound, as a matter of duty, to take an

active share in political contests, he did not hesitate to state his views unreservedly and fully, but he regarded the duty as an unpleasant one, and he unwillingly performed it.

In his books and numerous minor publications Sir Robert Christison displayed much literary skill. He had a wide familiarity with the classical writings of ancient and modern authors, and in private life he delighted to quote illustrative passages from favourite poets. He was an effective speaker, and, although trusting more to argument and reason in enforcing his views, when roused by opposition or by the interest of his subject, he exhibited the fervour of an orator.

His fondness for athletic exercises has already been referred to. We have Dr Acland's testimony that so late in his life as in the autumn of 1870 he still retained much of his youthful endurance. To quote Dr Acland's words, "As a member of the Royal Sanitary Commission, I was in need of the wise counsel of my colleague, and came to Scotland to seek an interview. I found him at Lochgoilhead. . . . Next day he decided—mind, he was over three-score years and ten—to walk me up Ben Ihm. He beat me hollow. As we went he discoursed on everything we saw, 'from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows on the wall;' everything was as his familiar friend. When we reached the summit, a pocket sextant was produced; measurements were to be taken of disputed Ordnance distances from Mull and from Eig, round the Paps of Jura, down to Ailsa Craig. It was bitterly cold, but he stayed to perform gymnastic exercises in mental arithmetic, upon sines and upon angles. We then descended, discussing every geological question, Plutonic or Neptunian, Huttonian or Wernerian, till we reached home again. Next day, happily for the Southron, it was wet and stormy, so that no other height could be attempted. I had often sat before him in the class-room; now I was to sit behind him as number three in a four-oar to his stroke; . . . he led us miles down the loch and back again as a refresher before dinner, and as a prelude to a long evening's work on the details of a stiff sanitary memorandum, afterwards published in the Sanitary Report." His last indulgence in the favourite pastime of mountain climbing was in 1878, when he ascended Ben Vrackie, in Perthshire, although he was then over eighty-two years of age.

In the subsequent years of his life he retained sufficient strength, notwithstanding occasional disablements from ill-health, to continue to a moderate extent the walking exercise he was so fond of, limiting his expeditions, however, to level ground. After his return from last year's autumn holiday at Ballachulish, the encroachments of advancing years were manifest to his friends, although little impairment of his mental faculties could be detected. Shortly before Christmas he became so feeble as to be compelled to keep his bed; and the advance of feebleness and the occurrence of dyspeptic symptoms excited the apprehensions of his sons, and



produced in his own mind a foreboding that the end was approaching. This foreboding was strengthened, and perhaps even originated, by the discovery, first made by himself, of a tumour in the abdomen, which gradually advancing emaciation, resulting from loss of appetite and difficulty in retaining food, soon rendered easy of detection. On Monday, the 23rd of January, he lapsed into a state of unconsciousness, in which condition he remained until death occurred, a few minutes before six o'clock on the morning of Friday, the 27th of January.

Sir Robert Christison was a member of the Church of Scotland, and had long been attached as an elder to the kirk-session of St George's Established Church. He was married in 1827 to Henrietta Sophia, daughter of Mr David Brown of Greenknowe, Stirlingshire. Mrs Christison died in 1849, but there survive three sons. The eldest, Alexander, who has succeeded to the baronetcy, was born in 1828, and is now Surgeon-General of the North-West Provinces and Oudh, with the rank in the Bengal Army of Deputy Surgeon-General; the second, David, was born in 1830, and is an M.D. of Edinburgh; and the third, John, was born in 1832, and is a Writer to the Signet, and the energetic and able Secretary of the Edinburgh University Court.

The wide-spread feeling of regret which Sir Robert Christison's death occasioned was manifested in the generally-expressed desire that an opportunity should be given to the chief public bodies in Edinburgh and to his numerous admirers to accompany his remains to their last resting-place. The funeral took place on Wednesday, the 1st of February. The Court, Senate, General Council, and students of the University; the Town Council of Edinburgh; the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons; the University Rifle Volunteer Company; deputations from several of the Scottish Universities, and from all the important societies and public bodies of Edinburgh; representatives of the London Edinburgh University Club; and an immense gathering of private friends—all joined in testifying their esteem for the veteran professor and citizen; and the route followed by the mournful procession, from St George's Church to the New Calton Burying-Ground, was lined by crowds of sympathizing onlookers.

The last event was a fitting termination to a career of unexampled duration in signal services to mankind.

T. R. F.

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No man who once saw Sir Robert Christison could ever mistake him for any one else. His nature was homogeneous, and curiously consistent. As a physician, though he might not have all the suavity and expressive kindliness of the elder and younger Begbies, nor the—shall we call it?—the mesmeric power of the huge-brained and anomalous Simpson; nor that instant fixture of reliance which

Syme's eyes, more even than his words, gave and kept; nor the penetrating look, as of a warlock, of Dr John Scott, he had much of the best that they had not in such quantity—he had the *momentum* of a strong, clear, well-knowledged mind, determined on doing its best for his patient's good, and that best well worth its name, and, once confided in, he was so for ever. To have such a command of all known drugs, he was singularly simple in his medicines and general treatment. As a lecturer he was, for the subjects he treated, we may say perfect, full of immediate knowledge as distinguished from mediate, orderly in its arrangement, lucid in its exposition rather, perhaps, than luminous, for it did not need that—strong and impressive in its application. His life-long friend Mr Syme was sometimes more luminous than lucid, though always full of power over the thought of others, quickening it and making what he said unforgettable. That great, amorphous genius, John Goodsir, was often largely luminous and sometimes sparingly lucid.

In his experiments Christison was exquisite, and never failed, unlike his excellent and gifted predecessor, Dr Andrew Duncan, junr., whom some of us elders may remember setting agoing a process at the beginning of the hour, telling us (unluckily) what we would see, and then casting, all through the lecture, furtive, and at last desperate and almost beseeching glances at the obdurate bottle, till at the close he, with a sad smile, said, "Gentlemen, the failure of this experiment proves more than its success!"

The bent of Christison's mind was scientific and positive rather than philosophic, speculative, or presaging. He was more occupied with what is, than with why it is, or what it may become, and in this region he did his proper work excellently, with a clear decision and thoroughness.

He had the natural qualities of a great soldier, and was full of martial ardour and sense. He has sometimes been called distant and cold. He had great natural dignity, and was not of an effusive turn, being warmer inside than out, which is better than the reverse; but that he had tender and deep feelings, as well as strong energy and will, the following circumstance may well show. It refers to what, if said in his lifetime, would have brought a flush of displeasure on that noble face. His wife, a woman of great beauty, and better, was in her last long illness. She was going to the country for a month, and her husband heard her give orders that a piece of worsted work which she had finished should be *grounded* and made up as an ottoman, and ready in the drawing-room on her return. A few days before that, he asked if it was completed; it had been totally forgotten. He said nothing; but, getting possession of the piece, he sat up for two or three nights and *grounded* it with his own hand, had it made up, and set his wife down on it, as she had wished. Is not that beautiful?—a true, manly tenderness, worth much and worth remembering: "Out



of the strong comes forth sweetness." His love of Nature, from her flowers to her precipices and mountains, and his pursuit of her into her wildest fastnesses, "haunted him like a passion," increasing with his years. His Highland residences during the latter part of his life gave him great delight, and fed his intrepid, keen, searching spirit. He never saw a big mountain but he heard it, as it were, saying to him, "Come on—and up;" and on and up he went, scaling the tragic *Cobbler* and many else. He had a genius for nice handiwork, and took pains with everything he did. The beauty and minuteness of his penmanship we all know; he might, as Thackeray said of himself, have turned an honest penny by writing the Lord's Prayer on the size of a sixpence.

But we must end, though half has not been said. We, his old friends, can never forget him, or hope ever to see his like again.

J. B.

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One of our oldest and most distinguished citizens—a man of European reputation—was laid in his grave yesterday, followed by a multitude of mourners.

Sir Robert Christison was our *ultimus Romanorum*—for he had in him much of the best of the old Roman—the last of the great race; his companions at starting—the Gregorys, Alison, and Syme, etc.—all gone before him. He was, as to will and ability, a primary man; not that he was what is commonly called a man of genius; rather he was a man of a quite unusual quantity and quality of talent—that is, power of applying his faculties to given objects. Mr Syme had talent and genius too; but Christison had what might be called a genius for exact and strenuous work, for general energising of body and mind. He had a knack of getting things at first hand; his knowledge was immediate, more than mediate. He was emphatically an Edinburgh man—all his life long going in and out before us, seen and read of all men. No man ever thought there was in him what was not there, though many might not find all that was there, for his heart was not worn on his sleeve; and in some of the deeper parts of his nature he, perhaps, did himself injustice, from his recoil from the opposite excess. We were all proud of the noble old man (old only in years), with his erect head, his rapid step, his air of command.

Of his inner character, as already said, he made no show; but it might be divined by the discerning mind, for he was too proud and too sincere to conceal anything.

Till the last four weeks, though his health had been somewhat failing for two years, his mental faculties remained entire and alert. His voice and mind were as powerful as ever when he spoke at the meeting with Lord Rosebery and the Lord Advocate on the

Scottish Universities. He retained to the last his love of nature and his pursuit of her glories and beauties, happy in proving that his old friend Ben Nevis was not only king of the Bens, but that he had the noblest glen and the grandest precipice of them all. May we, his citizens, be the better of thinking of that honourable, full, and well-spent life—manly, gentlemanly, upright, true to old friends and faiths. *Non cum corpore, extinguuntur magnæ animæ, placide quiescas!*

J. B., *Scotsman*, February 2, 1882.



## SIR ROBERT CHRISTISON.

AN esteemed correspondent sends us the following :—

One of our oldest and most distinguished citizens—a man of European reputation—was laid in his grave yesterday, followed by a multitude of mourners.

Sir Robert Christison was our *ultimus Romanorum*—for he had in him much of the best of the old Roman—the last of the great race ; His companions at starting—The Gregorys, Alison, and Syme, &c.—all gone before him. He was, as to will and ability, a primary man ; not that he was what is commonly called a man of genius ; rather he was a man of a quite unusual quantity and quality of talent—that is, power of applying his faculties to given objects. Mr Syme had talent and genius too ; but Christison had what might be called a genius for exact and strenuous work, for general energising of body and mind. He had a knack of getting things at first hand ; his knowledge was immediate, more than mediate. He was emphatically an Edinburgh man—all his life-long going in and out before us, seen and read of all men. No man ever thought there was in him what was not there, though many might not find all that was there, for his heart was not worn on his sleeve ; and in some of the deeper parts of his nature he, perhaps, did himself injustice, from his recoil from the opposite excess. We were all proud of the noble old man (old only in years), with his erect head, his rapid step, his air of command.

Of his inner character, as already said, he made no show ; but it might be divined by the discerning mind, for he was too proud and too sincere to conceal anything.

Till the last four weeks, though his health had been somewhat failing for two years, his mental faculties remained entire and alert. His voice and mind were as powerful as ever when he spoke at the meeting with Lord Rosebery and the Lord Advocate on the Scottish Universities. He retained to the last his love of nature and his pursuit of her glories and beauties, happy in proving that his old friend Ben Nevis was not only king of the Bens, but that he had the noblest glen and the grandest precipice of them all. May we, his citizens, be the better of thinking of that honourable, full, and well-spent life—manly, gentlemanly, upright, true to old friends and faiths. *Non cum corpore extinguuntur magnæ animæ, placide quiescas !*



The Lord Ordinary to-day closed the records in these two actions. In the one, Mrs Julia Orr or Fraser, wife of John Fraser, M.D., residing at Parkburn, Kilsyth, asks the Court for judicial separation from her husband, on the ground of his alleged cruelty and infidelity to her. She at the same time asks for decree of aliment for herself at the rate of £250 a-year, and for the two younger children of the marriage, who are now residing with her in Clarence Street, Edinburgh, and whom she craves to be allowed to retain, at the rate of £50 a year each. In the second action, the husband, who denies that the averments on which his wife grounds her action of separation and aliment are founded in fact, asks decree of divorce against her, on the ground of her alleged infidelity to him with a miner at Kilsyth. It would appear from the statements of the parties in the records that they were married on 7th April 1857, the lady being a daughter of the late Major John Orr of Dullatur, of the 7th Fusilier Guards, and, at the time of her marriage, 28 years of age. Nine children have been born of the marriage, of whom the eldest is 23 years of age. The wife denies the allegation of infidelity made against her.

Counsel for Mrs Fraser—Mr M'Kechie. Agent—John Macpherson, W.S.

Counsel for Dr Fraser—Mr Wallace. Agents—Rhind, Lindsay, & Wallace, W.S.

(Before Lord M'Laren.)

THE UNITED TELEPHONE COMPANY (LIMITED) v.  
ALEXANDER MACLEAN.

In this case, as previously stated, interdict is sought at the instance of the United Telephone Company, London, against the infringement by the respondent, who is a telegraph engineer, telephone contractor, and electrician, 9 and 13 West Register Street, Edinburgh, of two patents for telephonic instruments; the first being the original telephone invented by Mr Graham Bell, and patented in this country in the name of Mr Morgan Brown; the second being the transmitting instrument, invented by Mr Edison, and patented in his own name. The case was recently at proof.

The Lord Ordinary to-day gave judgment for the complainers, with expenses. In the course of his opinion, his Lordship said that the question was, whether the instruments which, according to evidence, were supplied by the respondent to a professional firm in Edinburgh, constituted an infringement of the complainers' patents, or either of them. It was alleged that the respondent used Edison's transmitting instrument, and Bell's receiving instrument. With respect to Bell's invention, the defence was, that the patent was anticipated by the premature publication of the invention before the letters patent were taken out. With respect to Edison's patent, there were two defences—(1) an objection to the patent itself, founded on an alleged discrepancy between the provisional and the complete specifications; (2) a denial that the respondent's transmitting instrument involved the use of Edison's invention. Dealing first with the invention of Mr Bell, he said that the essential parts of Bell's invention appeared to be (1) a tympanum or circular plate of steel, or other metal susceptible of inductive action, for receiving the air pulses or undulations of speech; (2) the transmission in a closed circuit of electric undulations of the